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H. A.
P. Q.

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HAROLD ACTON

LAMENT FOR ADONIS



NOW fogs enfold the sea
And berries fall from eaves,
The cat's eyes glitter green into the dark.
The sloping hills of myrrh,
The trees with tender anise overweighed,
The pointed flag-leaves stir
Only to weep again,
Only to sob and mourn Adonis dead.

Throughout this dolorous night of cloudy jade
Even the hornless dragon of the sea,
The green and golden sequined basilisk,
The water-scorpion and the python-king
Like sad eclipses trail about the land.
The crane, the ibis and the mango-bird,
The jungle-fowl, the heron and the roc,
The badger and three-footed tortoise join
In pouring out their eyes.

O Cypris violet-stoled, O wrapped in purple woof,
Arise and beat your azure-veined breasts!
Small jewelled nipples, bleed!
For I have seen you make that curvèd mouth
A bed of balsam, bed of crisp lush flowers,
Whose poor crushed frozen lips compactly closed
Lie, flakes of ice, where once were flakes of fire,
Their loveliness a thing of agony.

LAMENT FOR ADONIS

The moon has slanted off, and querulous ghosts
Hover along the brink of treacherous voids
And leap into this night of blinded eyes,
(Blind now to pleasure's lapping ecstasies);
This peacock-throated night whose stifling cries
Shudder and crack: 'tis Misery who calls
'Woe' to the black solemnities of day
For loveliest Adonis—he is dead.

Low on the hills he lies, the lovely bleeding one,
His throat aflash with faint stunned strands of light.
Low on the hills he lies and breathes his life away
And from his thigh of milk-white agate gashed,
 Slit by the cruel tusk,
The ruby blood drips down his skin of snow.
Beneath his brows stars set in crystal deep,
(Once memories, hungers glinted in their pools),
Are glazed dim, opaque and lustreless,
The blue orbs burn no more beneath translucent lids.
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night,
The rose has fled his lip: the very kiss hangs dead,
The kiss that Cypris never will forgo.

And when the bitter white wind breaks the morn,
His gathered hounds bay gloom about his corpse,
The green-haired Nereids of the marsh make moan,
Frail flowers dabble pollened cheeks with tears,
From vavil to calyx petals weep . . .
Long spiral tufts of drooping galingale,

LAMENT FOR ADONIS

The shadowy deer-grass and the swallow-wort
Sob through their bat's wing tissues tremulous,
The poplars weeping amber in the vales,
The orchises and sandal-trees, lament.

But Aphrodite with unbraided hair
And tragic thorn-pierced feet so delicate,
Calls through the woodlands and again, again.
O, more than music's many stringed charms,
His lulling name reverberates afar,
Where faint sails clasp the ribbands of the sea.
But round his navel leaps the thick dark blood,
His chest is lapped in scarlet from the thighs,
Now purpled are those limbs afore as white
As veils of snow unflecked by merest breeze.

Cypris was fair: whilst her Adonis lived,
The light would melt her body into song.
But with Adonis has her beauty died,
Died as a vaporous melody on a lute.
'Woe, woe, for Cypris!' all the mountains call;
The oak-trees answer: 'For Adonis, woe!'
For Aphrodite all the rivers weep,
The wells bewail Adonis on the hills.
Echo resounds, 'Ai, ai . . . Adonis dead . . .
Most beautiful Adonis . . . he is dead . . .'
As Venus saw the wasting limbs, the wound
Gashed in the whiteness of her loved one's thighs,
She clasped him to her, moaning supply warm
Against his chilled inertness:

LAMENT FOR ADONIS

‘Farewell, Adonis; once, as I was telling
Deluding tales of happiness, the morrow,
When I had thought that joy had come for dwelling,
Came sorrow.

‘The almoner of death, the silent creeper,
Has snared my love, and I shall see him never,
I, manacled in miseries, a weeper
For ever.

‘A widowed goddess with her beauty setting
Like a gold sun to rise no longer, never,
Whose love, with Acheron, is fast forgetting
Her for ever.’

For each blood-drop the Paphian sheds a tear,
And tears and blood on earth are turned to flowers:
The ruby blood brings forth the pursy rose,
The tears brings forth the air-white wind-flower,
For loveliest Adonis—he is dead.

No seemly couch, this lonely bed of leaves
For dead Adonis: beautiful in death
As one that stumbles on a slumber, falls
On downy-wingèd doze of braided air.

Your bed let him possess, Cytherea,
Lay him to sleep on couch of twisted gold,
The couch that yearns for wan Adonis’ limbs.
Cast on him drooping eyes of jasmine-flowers,
Nay, all the flowers have faded in his death,
As keen swift lovely murmurs drowned on breeze.

LAMENT FOR ADONIS

Sprinkle his limbs with bakkaris and myrrh:
Nay, perished all the perfumes in his death,
All flushed soft legendary scents dissolve—
Disquieting erotic memories.

The torches on the lintel all are quenched,
And Hymenaeus rends the bridal crown.
No more the song is 'Hymen': a new song
The Graces grievelike mournful Autumn boughs,
The toneless sound that means a broken heart:
'Woe, for Adonis, son of Cinyrus!'
To him the Muses chant their starry music,
And painted insects floating motionless
At their weird sound, unconscious of the day,
Bright feathered wings hung in the gloom of thought
Mimic the melancholy atmosphere,
And dry words start and rattle in the throat,
Shudder in sorrow; but he does not heed.

The bending vault of stars,
Of cool green quiet stars,
Where clouds but catch the palest tinge of day,
Is tangled with the sea;
The moonlight tossed and thrown by jostling waves
Refrain from dirges, cease,
O Cypris, your lament.
Again you must bewail another year!

HAROLD ACTON

WORDS

IN long prim rows the formal words distend,
Stuffed birds with loosely fitting beaks, they glare
With beady eyes pathetically vague
Beneath their sober domes of dusty glass.
(Pale frigid flute-voiced children promenade
To suck the air into their fading lungs,
Native to soot: the tortoise-shell effect
Of sunsets barred by buildings smug and bare
And sleek pat streets of asphalt: gamins drab
Whose nightingales the Cockney sparrows are.
When furry frost hangs white about the chin,
These too will cough a dirge, no doubt, and die!)
O words, assert yourselves! from long prim rows
Trip out and weave new patterns with the clouds
That preen their swan-wings spread upon the air,
Then loll like tufts of lilac heavily;
Lush coolness, limpid nebulousness; where
The dove-tame zephyrs leap in shapely loops
To fill the windy trammel of a skirt,
Or must we oil you with cerebral sweat?
When levers, springs and cogs are oiled you'll come
Naked and unembarrassed by the moon.

.
The words have answered, lo, the words advance
No longer blocked in patterns, dribble out
In pleasant drops, with bird-quick flickers trip
Into a dissonance or discord: so,

WORDS

Sharp darts of dappled sound to cleave the ear.
Some strut, and laughing madly, stridently,
These crack their wind-swift fingers, or like ants
Waving antennae, struggle bravely on
Beneath their heavy burdens, one or two
Twinkle, then flutter off like hueless leaves,
Or dart and flash like wagtails on a pool,
Some fired with sulphurous glow, and some askew
Sway perilously, like a drunkard's hat.
But what are these with puckered, pointed ears
That flit among the crowds like strips of tape?
They seem to stumble into tragedies.
'Oh, we shall twine you merry wreaths,' they say,
'Gay wreaths, festoons of entrails for your brow!'
Their eyes like little glasses of liqueur
Glitter and frighten me: within, without
Words with hot breath hiss subtly venomous,
A million droning insects in my ears,
A million mottled thrushes in my mind.

HAROLD ACTON

TRÉPAK

THE trees sprawl up like trumpets in the night,
Great ghosts of once-viridian: but now,
Fibred with brittle tufts of massy snow,
They creak with burdened whiteness, for the bright
Blue-prismed stalactites like wounds of light
Are pendulous from their pagoda-boughs.
And when a wind whirs in among the trees,
As some Silenus fumbling frantic hands
Into a cleft of honey, they cast off
A whittling dust of little hispid stars.
The moon is hungry. Lo! the moon has thinned
To finger-nail's fine fringe; she is forlorn
With thought of Spring's flown hollow spells of joy,
When the now-passionless statue of her mind
Was tremulous with passion, nescient lips
Stammered lush ingenuities of love.
Then Summer crackled like a yawn of fire:
The big-lipped consummation of desire.
A starved, lean-ribbed dog with rheumy eyes
Yelps up at her, his poor thin thread of voice
Nigh snaps, and trails its note into a growl,
Then tumbles, frozen stark, amongst the snow.
The barbèd minutes shiver chillily
In wait for something.

Ho! who's this, a man?
In this torn catafalque of barren boughs?
A patriarchal bearded brittle-bones

T R É P A K

Daft, dazed with drink, shuffles his slipshod feet
Scattering sprays of crisply sparkling snow.
Death clanks his rusty mail and flaps his wings
And ogling, draws the man into a dance:

‘No more the malady of life unlived
With no grand-opera effects; no more
Heroic sunsets, agonies of rose
To wear you faint; no more the whirlpool’s mist
Of good and evil. It shall be revealed
There is no meaning, no significance
In all this clamour, in this viscous trail
Of sentimental sanatoriums.
Those frowning stoic caryatides,
Who contemplate in decorous solitude
This elegant Golgotha of futile birth
Are fraudulent mountebanks; unmanicured,
Life’s pointed nails grapple and tear your flanks
Without a murmur trembling from your lips.
O broken vessel sprayed with broken light,
Come to oblivion’s arms; sepulchral night,
Inchoate truth await you—they are kind.
Close your red lashless eyelids. Death is fair . . .’

IN CHURCH

... **I**N God the Father Almighty... the voice drones on,
Leading the murmur like some old bell-wether
His stumbling flock; words... words... at last Amen,
And shuffling round they kneel again to pray
None know in truth to whom. Rather than this—
The idol leering cruelly through the gloom,
With bright jewelled eyes, hideous and old,
And fathers sacrificing children to their God.

T. O. BEACHCROFT
THE LAPIDARY



JEWELS from the crystal vein were thrown,
And crushed to paste between our thoughts,
Until we found this blazing stone
In clear trapezohedral quartz.

Can metaphysics tell us this
Is rhyolite or granophyre?
Or answer by analysis
The intellectual desire?

Now at the table we will sit;
On the white cloth our treasure lies:
With fingers cool we'll handle it,
And turn its beams into our eyes.

Yet eyes cannot be clear, that gaze
For long upon this blazing stone;
And may the hand approach this blaze,
And not grow hot through to the bone?

Men say 'love dies'; then let the mind
Its cruel apostasy confess:
'Love dies, love dies'—must we be blind?
I know I never thought so less.

See how this lamp that is to die
Fills the dark cottage with its light,
And fluttering mysteries brush by
To end beneath our eaves their flight.

THE LAPIDARY

These rays the spirit shall enfold,
Their light will be no less sublime,
Though I grow very foul and old,
And even you turn grey in time.

Now you will smile and seem to say,
'Fantastic mind! how you digress;
And has a man no better way
To put what words will not express?'

T. O. BEACHCROFT

THE SHOWER

HAVE not our souls leaned out and smiled,
In promise, from the casements of our eyes?
And have they not beguiled
The breath, that flies,
To puff them on the air,
And secretly met there—
From flesh exiled?

If our free souls have taken wings,
Shall we by love snare them in springs?

For lovers wonder fretfully,
‘Dear love, think you our spirits truly meet,
Joined in one ecstasy?
Or does the sweet
Ascension of the flesh
Rather the soul enmesh,
Than set it free?

But if we do not even kiss,
Can our clear souls be timed like this?

These liquid gleams of sun and rain
Pour light, where tongues and words only perplex;
Let lover’s subtle pain
Other souls vex,
While ours from love slip far,
Through each inclusive bar,
Bone and membrane,
Till naked souls in fecondine
Fingers and lips together twine.

GEOFFREY CURTIS

STOOP, & KEEP CLOSE THIS MOMENT

STOOP, and keep close this moment, Poetry!
And give me power to carve in living line
Its wonder, that a quiet surety
May keep it young and warrant it was mine.
Make it for me a porch where spirit retires
When it is flustered with the buzz and hum,
The sedulous attrition of desires,
The pride that makes it preen its virtues glum.

When sins and duties teach me to forget
That Spell whereat who listens is new born
And hears sea-noises trample down regret,
—The fugal splash of the returning dawn,
Clamour made by the surge of other souls
Which makes this pool forget its foetidness
And isolation, thinking how it rolls,
The kindred ocean, kindred none the less.

This moment is an earnest of new being,
For in this garden walking quietly
I find by reason of a moment's seeing
That microbe self is withered: and for me
Of this decay is consolation made
Who taste the wealth of all humilities.
I care not that my meagre worship fade
If Ocean ceases not his litanies.

C. I. FRAZER

WAR

THERE'S joy in hate: in slaughter, skill:
These fill fine men until they die—
Men whose brains throb, and teem, and thrill
As they conceive new agony.

The glory of a brazen helm,
The beauty of a sinewed arm—
These are sufficient to o'erwhelm
Our reasons, and to work our harm.

The eyes that lingered lovingly
Upon some quiet countryside,
Now scan a phantom company
Of friends that fought, and slaying, died.

Shed blood sinks slow: and so to us
These creatures, fashioned of our lust,
Cry loud to take life—even thus,
Taking, we shall return to dust.

PAINT AND WOOD

JUST as a child in his white sheeted bed
Can form his lands and seas—with fingers, ships—
And snow-capped mountains waiting to be climbed,
I have white roads that drop into the blue,
And splash the colour over all their hedges,
And Jersey cows with their demure quiet eyes,
And smooth rolled lawns & home-made cakes & tea.
Would you not think that here was everything?
But still the child cries out for wooden painted toys,
Although he sucks away the Zebra's stripes,
And Ham and Japhet soon have lost their legs.
All Nature's mine, they say, and I agree,
And yet God knows I am dissatisfied.

GRAHAM GREENE

CHILDISHNESS

IF I'd to choose with life in one scale,
Poetry in another—
Life, the bus that trembles through a golden haze,
With skyward lights that form a shifting crown,
With crowds, & with shop windows, lamp-lit, beautiful;
And poetry—a little painted wooden horse
With legs immovable
And mane that's always getting chipped about—
My choice would much surprise you, I suppose.
But then I've never lost my childishness.

MICHAEL HANKINSON

NO WANTON LOVELINESS...

NO wanton loveliness shall find
An echo in my eye;
I will reject the shining lips
Of harlots passing by;
Forgo a beckoning white hand
For whiter chastity.

Unto the darkness of men's minds
These promise pale delight,
But I will lie and hear their steps
Parading down the night,
And turn to you and find your hand
Against my cheek, more white.

DESMOND HARMSWORTH

DAY

I WATCHED the Day go slowly past,
Blatant coarsely-coloured thing,
With eyes that shine and lips that last
A few hours' fretful blustering.

And so I saw the end of Day,
With sprawling arms and legs astride,
Amid the dust along the way,
Clamouring, undignified.

And in the dust and glare and teen,
Emptily, foolishly,
I looked where blistered day had been,
And stared into monotony.

What is this dross, this wasted birth,
Starkness and breath and noise of weeping?
... But suddenly about the earth
A soft wind stole; and, waked from sleeping,

Colour moved in the daffodils;
And Quiet came with shadow-fall;
And lightly stepped across the hills
Evening, Evening rhythmical. . .

In the Night's blue ecstasy
I saw the hushed eternal trees:
They stood beneath the antique sky
—Silent caryatides.

DESMOND HARMSWORTH

SMOKE GOETH UP...

SMOKE goeth up from farm or desert fire
At eve, a slender strand, a steady stream,
Or like a prayer ascends from funeral pyre,
A silent music, an unbroken theme;
Then shatters in eddies, breaks along the air,
Races in swift convolvèd joy, or flows
To invisible peace, and hangs contented there.
So in the night the soul steals forth and goes
In secrecy, the body laid asleep,
Out in blue space, on wings of ecstasy;
Mounts up without a cry, trembles to keep
Tryst with the flaming stars; divinely free,
Floats in the all but unremembered deep,
To find at last its own tranquillity.

DESMOND HARMSWORTH

THE LEAVES

WE are the leaves, the wan, the drifted leaves.
We are the leaves that drift at the wind's whim only;
Whirl in the voiceless dusk, lashed by the wind.
We that are almost meaningless dance and dance—
We that have sinned we know not where nor how;
We are the leaves.

We are the skinny and dry, the old and twisted;
We are the dead that dance
At dawn in the sun's chill countenance,
When meadows are pearled with dew & lawns lie misted.
Pity us, pity us, when we are whirled
Out of existence, over the world,
Or frailly drift on air and scattering
Shift like souls and falling shake
Into the lake.

DOROTHY ALEXANDER HEINLEIN

ELEGY

LAZARUS, why did you not tell
What is beyond? Then I should know
How deeply lies the dust, the snow,
Over her who was loved so well.

You could have whispered it quite low,
'T would scarce have tarnished Mary's trust,—
'Mary, but lightly lies the snow,
Mary, but lightly lies the dust.'

BRIAN HOWARD

SCENIC RAILWAY

For a harp, an oboe, and three glockenspiels

I SIT in a truck painted a shiny vermillion and chocolate,
Grinding along—clanking along a little black iron track
poised

Way up here on a sparse framework of overgrown needles,
in the hot

Blue powder of the sky—the shrilly vibrating sky—

Silky blue powder. Ooh, I *am* hot. . .

Out of its metal shutters the blue powder sky showers bursts
of granulated lights

Which twinkle, slowly, and flash in the white sun . . . pink,
blue, mauve, and iridescent orange. . .

Here's a tunnel in the sky—covered with Swiss chalêts. . .

what a strong smell of caramels! *Bang Bang*

Merciful sakes alive . . . what was that? . . .

Ooh, here are the panoramas . . . see the fern rockery? and,

ooh look! a grotto with a glass bead waterfall— and
there, a wedding cake, with coloured icings and silvery
seraphim—and over there, a tin mermaid with coral
eardrops—and a fairy queen in brown poplin with fur
cuffs . . . isn't it *pretty?* *Bang*

Ooh! now we're in the open again. How the sun crashes
and sparkles

On the viridian sponge-cake of the trees . . .

Look at the flags! pink and yellow . . . green and magenta. . .

Listen to the roundabout music! like electric bulbs bursting
on asphalt, or the rubbing together of biscuits. . .

Bang

We get out here.

BRIAN HOWARD

PANORAMA SEEN BY THE YOUNG
AMERICAN WOMAN SLEEPING

THE shining queens have run away over the mountains
carrying their stone dolls wrapped in white lace,
and they have left their soldiers behind to maltreat me
a company who have no legs, but only a curling fish's tail
like a leaf of tarnished metal, which they flap thunderously
in the inky interstices of these secret rocks, while their
single eyes
shoot beams of coloured light, now up into the celestial
fires to seek me out
and now in amongst this cold shubbery
where I am hiding with such difficulty

(I wish I was back home in Philadelphia).
why did the small queens all run so hurriedly?
just because I play Satie on my musical box
a little furtive music like the rubbing together of biscuits
coming from behind a laurel bush in the vegetable garden
made them all go running away . . .

The Prince de la Fine Fleur said I look very approachable
when he stepped back and looked at me
after putting that peony in my corsage
so why did all those bathing ladies—sleep well, ladies!—
abandon me without so much as saying, 'See you soon,
my dear?'

E. T. JAMES

TO THE MONKS OF A MONASTERY
IN ITALY

HAVE you so chanted in the morning light
Harmonic softness to the listening ear,
And soothed with your tall cypress trees the sight,
While centuries grew from each successive year?

Has a divine and rhythmic law held sway
Within those walls?—as nightly through the sky
The stars wheel orderly—and all your day
Been to those pealing bells a long reply?

Then your monotony of weary pain
Is as an artist's toil, who ceaseless strives
To fashion perfectly; and that much gain
Has come of all your little countless lives.

JOHN LINNELL

SPRING SOLITUDE

YOUNG Bartimaeus lately given sight,
In wonder at all life
Ceased following his Lord,
Through whom such light
Had pierced the dark at speaking of a word.

And as he passed spring-mad by wood and field,
Those who had heard his tale
Decried ingratitude,
That he'd not yield
To serve the Lord and minister His good.

They were grown used to flowers and the sun,
Faces of girls and boys,
Snow on the mountain-sides;
Since life begun
Scarce noted moonlight on the wavering tides.

But Bartimaeus, like a prisoner freed,
In fierce delight amazed
And speechless seized on all;
With fiery greed
Made one with burst of spring and autumn's fall;

Clothed himself round with colours of the land,
Sank into heaven's blue
Until it lapped him close,
With trembling hand
Reached out to snatch its beauty from the rose

SPRING SOLITUDE

And make it more his own. In the sunset West
He drank gold glory in,
And with the boisterous gale
On mountain crest
Shouted to see the cloud-ships onward sail.

He brooded with the silence of the sea,
Rushed on with Jordan's rage
And soared with birds on high,
Swayed with each tree
And wept with winter when the flowers must die.

And on a naked mountain-top at length
Stretched arms out wide and fell
Face earthward in amaze;
With new-found strength
Chanted to God triumphant hymns of praise.

After he looked for beauty down with men.
He'd heard of old of sin,
While blindness kept him clean;
Now fresh again,
First heard, then saw and cursed what eyes had seen.

Yet so was filled with beauty of his vision,
He fired the earth-bound too;
Till who had once decried
Forgot derision,
Seeing Christ reflected even when crucified.

JOHN LINNELL

II

HARMONY OF SPHERES

‘And not one of them is forgotten before God.’ *Luke* xii, 6

THEY’LL say our music’s but a paltry sound,
Touching none other, though it live or die.
Yet in this Universal Symphony
Our part’s to play; which, if it be not found,
The whole would lack, some contrapuntal ground
Left out. So even God’s Divinity
Were thus made incomplete, should we deny
And mute withhold our part within the round.

‘But, if it sink or die?’—Still let no grief
Gnaw at life’s sweet, to make the progress bitter,
Nor think the whole for anything less mellow.
Steady play on, unshaken in belief
The theme’s but changed, so now for both it’s fitter,
Some new duet with yet another fellow.

JOHN LINNELL

III

‘PHILOSOPHY OR LOVE?’

YET this is music, not philosophy,
That breathes this calm; from which indeed is grown
Heart's antidote of thought for cares unknown,
Unborn as yet to blast tranquillity.
If such should rouse and silence mount up high,
Philosophy itself, unseated, thrown,
Might fly the field; deserted self be blown
A thistledown without serenity.

After such music, silence? No, but mind
Plucks at the heartstrings with swift memory's fingers
That know but half the song, the rest leave aching.
Remains for weak and battered soul to find
This answer, while yet anguish stirs and lingers—
Whether last sleep be best or bruised waking?

JOHN LINNELL

IV

'GATHER YE ROSEBUDS'

OR should loved themes by time be overworn,
Mourn not their loss nor grieve that youth has fled;
For each leads on another, then is dead,
Beyond reach. Nor in your later knowledge scorn
Whate'er seemed foolish-young. From such was born
This present tale, itself soon brought to bed,
Mother of beauty richer, blood more red
And joy to heal where vulture life has torn.

Even as old songs, worn, folded and put by,
Their value tested, lie beneath unseen,
Treasured and praised nor ever thrown away.
So live what's past in honoured memory;
Let sleep what's yet to wake or might have been,
Only perfect the songs you sing to-day.

V

‘INTERVALS! INTERVALS!’

BUT should this music seem a moment thin
And lost awhile the theme, still do not fret.
It's not that love grows careless, to forget.
But, as the maker may not always spin
His thread one even thickness, there's no sin,
No deep-laid fault, if other life beget
One feeble hour of flagging from the set
Of music's tide still flowing firm within.

Even as fury of devouring flame
Rises, to fall should fall the wind that fans it,
Yet at the core burns longer, if it smoulder;
So in this gulf of echo; music's claim,
Though clear may pulse each note of love that spans it,
Tears heart the less for custom growing older.

JOHN LINNELL

VI

HOLD FAST

YET, though some rest be needed from this tense,
Firm be the hold on self and self's loved theme,
Lest other, falsely fair, divide the scheme
And cut the thread that holds it in suspense.
Even as hard awakening dulls the sense,
To shatter the porcelain figment of a dream,
Lest grasp such joy; and conscious self must seem
An atom robbed of all its own immense.

So too with music; half the beauty's lost
If to a sentimental, pervert song
The wayward mind be one short moment given.
Let guide the chosen path, no lying ghost
Lead once astray from discipline. Not long
Wear's beauty's fabric when the web is riven.

JOSEPH GORDON MACLEOD

SPRING

I AM full of turbulent anger against myself:
For the spring promises life,
And joy is to be shouted
Over the populous hills,
For the sound of the blackbird chuckling in the bushes,
For the sight of the thrush and the move of the river swans.

God has walked with his hand on the breast of spring,
He has touched with his golden feet
Where shall be the yellow flowers
And the stairway of the sun,
Where his hand and hers have met in a yearly blending,
And yet my lips are closed and dull of song.

Brother Adam, and Eve my sister, with you
I hide my shame away
In the quiet of a garden
Where godliness comes not.
In repentance I retire with my hands around your shoulders,
Adam's and Eve's, uncovered and ashamed.

For spring is a dawn when the sins of the night spring up
Like unforgotten dreams:
When the soul of a man is heavy,
And the Mother of all is sad
For his futile waste, for Sisyphus and Ixion
With boulder and wheel most miserable in Spring.

SPRING

To the earth the rain and the hid mysterious force
That bursts begotten seed:
To the thrush, his mate: to the lion
A lioness for his joy;

But nothing to man save the the labour of sweeping ashes
With blistered hands and brow chafed salt with sweat.

Will never to me the peace come nor the joy
Of spring, till the last spring come:
And then my unradiant body
Much enjoyed of the worm
Shall return to the God who begot it, there performing
In death the benefits it scorned in life?

In the joy that endures is ever enduring peace:
In the spring are all things pure.
There is naught but a pure delighting
On all the sun looks on.
Except upon man the miserable, the stranger,
Who sits on a chair with his back to the daffodils.

But I have known no peace, whether I walk
Under the budding oak
And amid the white narcissus:
Or tramp the happy streets
Most happy when they are empty and untrodden
With a man-made beauty that only man will spoil.

SPRING

I will again walk over the rich brown earth
And smell the rain thereon,
Or the new manure: or linger
Where a wet leaf casts on the air
A scent that is sweeter than any distilment, welcome
Physic for souls grown fretful and dismayed.

And when the night comes, up and down I'll go
Bearing between my arms
The child of the fragrant darkness,
And holding converse at last
With the terrifying company of the stars there
Whom I never before have dared to look upon.

How I, avoiding every complaint and grudge
Of long impatient man,
Shall hide me from the tramways
As I did before from God:
Endeavouring in the bosom of his apparel
To find a hiding-place before his wrath.

Now is my anger still. And the cool soft night
In at my window peeps
Like the head of a dog, uncertain
Whether he will or no:
Thus I shut the door, and stroking bid him welcome,
For the wind is chilly and company is good.

IN DISMAL WINTER

HE walks the street and winks at women
In the night, the slimy night,
When the lamp-light casts a glitter
On the wet street shimmering bright.

He walks the street and drinks Oporto—
Then his heart within him sings
In unison with lusty nature—
And he propagates and sings.

MY ROOM—THE DESK & CHAIR

THE brown flanks are of immaterial substance
Lending poise to the sharp edge down—
As if the vegetating soul of wood
Had strained its myriad points of will
All down that edge.
'Twas mighty, luminous and cleaving,
Wild and spiritual,
Real, and cleft the mind,
The battling mind's projection foamed
Like a faint sea round that edge gigantic and moral.
The chair with spreading arms beside
Was easeful, like an infinite bay
Welcoming the tired surge of the mind
Rebuffed from the straining edge.

FRANKLIN McDUFFEE

SONG

O SONG, O rapture, O desire,
O wings that take the air with fire,
O wings that tower, wings that hover,
Is music dead? Shall I recover
No whisper of the wings in flight,
No breath of bird song from the night,
No rush of wings by night or day
To free the singer from the clay?

Drop, birds of song, and cover
This throbbing heart, your lover.
Cover with warm white feather
From blight of frost or weather
The unborn thoughts that sleep
Within that cradle deep.
Be instant, birds of song!
The nest has waited long.

And when you stoop at last,
With wings together cast,
When to your passionate breast
The sleeping thought is pressed,
A bird, a burning wing,
A living flame shall spring,
And soaring, sweep along
A comet's trail of song.

O rapture, O desire,
O song, O birds of fire!
Drop, and deliver me,
And set the singer free.

FRANKLIN McDUFFEE

THIS HOUR

THIS hour I need you, brightest one,
For spring is on me unaware,
And floods me with its sudden sun,
And strikes the hidden passion bare.

Strongest and purest, give me power
To triumph in this clash of wills;
Aid me in this predestined hour
To trample on the thought that kills.

PETER QUENNELL

LEVIATHAN A Prologue

LEVIATHAN drives his broad and painted face
With the surge dumbly rippling round his lips,
Toward the Atlantid shore,
Not flat and golden like the cherubim
Or a face round and womanish like the seraphim,
But thick and barbed—the broad, barbed cheeks of DONNE.
Beneath he stretched his hands to the sea-forests,
Obscure and thick, with the cool freshes under,
Lifts his surprised brows to the sky's milky light,
New come from the abyss.

While a faint radiance, webbed from the wave's substance,
Clung to his changing limbs and his coiled body,
Reddening, making them darker than the sea,
Or half translucent.

And when the mouths of Atlantean brooks
Struck on his mouth with taste of sudden cold
And wound his shoulders like embracing hands,
He put out both thick palms and felt the shallows.

The salt had scurfed his body with white fire
And knotted the thick hair between his breasts—
And as he rose delicate Atlantis trembled,
Tilting upon the sea's plain like a leaf.

The passionless air hung heavy on Atlantis,
And the inclined spears of the flowering bushes
Smoothly dropped down their loosened, threaded blossoms,
Softening the pathways.

LEVIATHAN

For tideless night had covered her, and sealed
All scent within the narrow throat of flowers,
And sound within the navel of the hills,
And stars in the confusion of the air.

Within her darkness and unconsciousness
She hid all beauty, and her silences
Sounds' measures and sequences,
And the black earth quickened
With oppression of blossom.

Ah thief that swims by night—LEVIATHAN,
Rolled blindly in the wave's trough like a rotting thing,
Come to Atlantis' further edge by dark,
Poised over her quietness;

Measureless drunkard of the bitter sea,
Insatiate—like some slow stain
Creeping on pleasure's face
—Like sudden misery.

For you have built yourself a house, and heaped
Dried foam, and scurf and ruin of the waves,
And crudded thoughts and shapes hardly conceived,
—Thief, boaster.

So foul, so desolate,
That you are crept to seek new life
—Have crossed the water's plain
Desiring and by stealth to gain
For rankness, foolishness and half-conceived beauty
Some perfect shape—an Atlantean body.

PETER QUENNEL

MEANDER

I

HOW quiet Meander's springs are—how light she throws
Her shining body from the cool rock that spheres her
round,
Breaking with what small jet,
Sprung like faint sound
From a curled shell into long channel'd echoes.

Less almost than the stain of last night's dew
In the rocks' hollow,
More soft than rain that hardly bows a leaf,
Gentler than shadow,
That sways and ripples and moves, she turns to go
Through plashy grass and drenching fallen blooms,
To her quiet foothills.

Her valleys call her—the rocky asphodels
Parched—with sharp leaves—
And where beasts search out rain with curious tongues,
To the mists' fleeces
That dawn's too weak to break, the quivered hind
Pants in the fume of her own golden breath
On her soft uplands.

Swelling, her voice calls out like some flute's voice
Of something very far, desirable—
Her body like a jet of crudded light,
Like light made palpable.

MEANDER

Her single radiant stream sprang into my palm
And brimming the linked hollow of my hands,
With a caress almost too fine to bear,
Passed out unquivered,
Shaking fine nets of ripple in small pools
Around the quiet of dissolving light,
Tipped with sharp foaming,—

Straight, like a bird to its calling paramour,
Like anything that goes to its desire.

PETER QUENNELL

MEANDER

II

THEY come as soft as night or rain
These ripples of Meander's flow,
Each bearing some light stir of sound.

By pools where the deer drink,
By trees heavy with dark,
And by wet pasture
Where only hares take pleasure.

Like breath's warm stain slipping along a sword
—A hand in the breast plumage of a bird—
Gathered wind stoops and moves upon her water.

Swifter than any crooked limb can move,
The quick, unhurrying accent of her love
And her embracements slide from deep to deep,
By ruffling bars—intricacies of light—
And lucent shadows—to her last pools that keep
Between tall cliffs their store of floating calm.

SUCH AND SUCH

THE Devil took me aside and said such and such.
I was delighted, but rather afraid.

But the Devil said such and such, and I was assured.

So such and such things came to pass.

After these things the Headmaster took me aside and
said such and such.

I was astonished, and very afraid.

I said such and such to the Headmaster.

But the Headmaster said such and such.

‘How much,’ I said, ‘must I pay thee to pass to such
and such a place?’

‘Such and such,’ said the Booking-clerk.

THE USES OF POETRY

WHEN I was quite a little boy,
I wrote my poems out of joy;
And now I'll not be young again,
I write them chiefly out of pain.
My boyish rimes were very sad;
They were like lead, to hold to earth,
The joys that nearly burst their girth,
And keep a boy from going mad.
But now that I am getting old,
I poetize to turn to gold,
That superfluity of lead
Which presses on my weary head.

A MAN WOULD REJOICE...

A MAN would rejoice to play with her,
Because of the muscularity of her sunburnt arms.
A man would rejoice to soften with a kiss
The feint of sarcasm in her frightened eyes.

Her hair is hair indeed, abundant, crisp and red,
Cropped in a mass against her stretching neck.
A man would rejoice to plunge his fingers in it,
And feel the outline of her clever head.

A man would rejoice to hold her little breasts,
So white are they, and made so delicately.
A man would rejoice to play with her body,
So frankly does she love the body's play.

A. L. ROWSE

THE SHADOWS ON THE GLASS

WHEN far into the night I sit and work,
Within a dim room where the shadows lurk;

Still and black before me as a pond
A window is, and the deeper night beyond:

Shade of another world although it be,
The shapes of friendlier things I often see.

For there upon the mirrored deeps of space
Are the homely signs of this my chosen place:

A polished surface lit in kindly glow,
The tongues of firelight dancing in a row

On shelf and cupboard; and in far back-ground
The great doors that may move, and with no sound.

My self looks at me from the darkened glass,
And holds my eyes whenever they would pass:

And if a shadow now should wake and stir
This room to movement, and my heart to fear. . .

A sudden flash of the eyes, as a bird takes cover,
The moment broken, and the dread is over.

The room resumes its quiet homeliness,
And nothing stirs in the night's lone distances.

ERIC SCHROEDER

CONDENSATION OF AN OPERA

WORDS, kiss Alba's ear!
O This sombre boskage is the wake she drags,
For now she climbs like flame among what crags!
The lightless form she knows,
The halcyon colours pass;
Around her droop the iron snows,
And all her flowery body turned to glass.

Two giantesses gathering grass
Over the hill's ribs stooping came—
Closer—and then, behind their hats,
I saw their silvery teeth that moved
And glazed eyes aflame.

ROYALL SNOW

THE ADVENTURER

A FLOCK of swallows whirl
And swoop,
Hunting for their food
In a dusk that gathers fast.

While high above,
To reach the island of a cloud,
A hawk
Goes swimming up the scarlet waters
Of the setting sun.

JAMES SUTHERLAND

MOB QUAD, OXFORD

THIS naked Quad, this shadowy cup of stone,
Brimms at high noon with light.
(Ghosts we have none,
Grey step-sons of the night.)
But little winds walk very gently by;
And one stout red-faced man, jangling great keys,
Trails a flotilla of veiled visitors
To gape and marvel at our mysteries.
(Ghosts we have none—
They cannot bide the light
That some comedian god, laughing alone,
Tilts from the wide blue basin of the sky.)
Look then, and you shall mark,
Drifting as in a vast aquarium,
The meagre ghosts that haunt these ancient ways,
Gliding in the air as the white-bellied shark
In his green waters by Caribbean bays—
Until a far step echoing
Drops like a stone into this silent pool.
Then vanish ghosts—grey trout on quivering wing
They dart and separate down the shadows cool . . .
Yet when the ripples of the broken air
Smooth to a calm their clamorous circletings,
They come again with bats and evil things.

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